

2005 Session Review

In 2005, we approved an historic school construction budget and provided full-funding of voter-approved education initiatives

✓ Reduce class-size and provide better pay for teachers

In 2000, voters overwhelmingly approved two education initiatives. Budget surpluses and reserves were to have funded I-728 (reducing class sizes), while I-732 (better pay for teachers) identified no funding.

When the economy turned, so did the state's ability to make these needed investments.

This year, the Legislature voted to fully-fund both initiatives: we created the Education Legacy Trust to pay for I-728, while I-732 is covered by the general fund.

Funding these initiatives provides needed resources for our students and delivers on a promise made to the people of Washington.

✓ Construct and renovate our schools

The Capital Budget for 2005-07 advances education and creates hundreds of good jobs by allocating \$619 million for much-needed school construction, repairs and modernizations.

This record-breaking level of investment is a 54 percent increase over the previous budget, and it includes funding for high-performance buildings, environmental learning centers and emergency repairs.

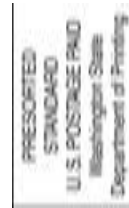
✓ Give every student a chance to succeed

The Learning Assistance Program provides state funding for students in need of additional assistance.

In the past, the state allocated funds based on test scores, but when test scores improved, schools lost funding. However, without the needed help, student test scores declined again, creating a see-saw of rising and falling test scores.

The Legislature passed, and Gov. Gregoire signed, a bill to allocate this funding based entirely on poverty, as there is a high correlation between student performance and family income.

Furthermore, the new budget invests \$25 million more to the Learning Assistance Program. This guarantees that not only will no school district lose funds when the formula changes, but as we bring all students to standards for graduation, more assistance is available.



Rep. Frank Chopp
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43rd Legislative District



Fall 2005

2005 Session Review

Representative Frank Chopp

Dear neighbors,

Earlier this year, the 2005 state Legislature became the most productive and progressive in decades. Over 500 bills were signed into law. And, we got done on time.

We focused on the basic issues of concern to people across Washington:

- ✓ Education
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Jobs

We centered on values in the public interest:

- ✓ Promoting common sense for the common good
- ✓ Working together for one Washington
- ✓ Reforming our government

This newsletter is a checklist of some highlights of what was accomplished in the 2005 session. More work still needs to be done in future sessions. If you have any comments, questions, or ideas on state issues, please contact my office.

As one of your 43rd District representatives, and as Speaker of the House of Representatives, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to serve the people of Washington. Thank you so very much.

Sincerely,

Frank Chopp

Speaker

Frank Chopp

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We moved our economy forward by investing in education and research, assisting local communities to create jobs, and investing in transportation.



✓ Create jobs

The Job Development Fund is a new tool we enacted to help local communities retain and recruit businesses – a top priority of local governments and Economic Development Councils throughout the state.

This fund will assist cities, counties, and ports to build needed infrastructure projects. These projects must meet strict standards for creating family wage jobs, stimulating economic development and promoting community growth.

✓ Strengthen our educated workforce

An educated workforce is a must for the emerging economy. We funded 7,900 new spots for students at our public colleges and universities.

We also bolstered the State Need Grant program to make college more affordable and we passed a measure aimed at increasing the use of apprentices in public-works projects.



✓ Lead the nation in research

The Life Science Discovery Fund will use a portion of the state's tobacco settlement money to leverage investment dollars to spur research in life sciences technology.

This investment authority will help make the state a leader in biotechnology research and development, which will grow existing businesses and attract new companies that traditionally offer higher-wage jobs.

✓ Invest in transportation

We approved the largest investment in our transportation infrastructure in state history. Safety was the focus, most importantly with \$2 billion in funding for a replacement of the damaged Alaskan Way Viaduct, a critical corridor for moving people and freight through our city. Over 250 other projects were funded throughout Washington.

We expanded health care for low-income kids and took steps toward covering all children. We also made prescriptions more affordable for seniors, won parity for mental-health coverage, and made strides in reducing homelessness.

✓ Provide health care for all children

Healthy children do better in school and in life, and access to health insurance is vital to helping children stay healthy.

Yet the number of uninsured kids in Washington has soared to almost 100,000 today.

We must do better, and we will. This session, we established a goal of making sure all children are covered by health care by 2010, and we took specific steps to expand coverage for 40,000 kids immediately this year.



✓ Ensure mental health parity

An enormous bill so often comes due for citizens – and for society as a whole – whenever a mental illness is left untreated. Unfortunately, and many times tragically, people who have mental-health problems don't get treatment because their health insurance won't pay for it.

This session, we changed that. Insurance plans must now provide the same level of coverage for mental-health services as they do for medical and surgical services.

After all, paying for mental-health treatment today is a lot less expensive than paying for an emergency room – or a prison cell – tomorrow.

A number of large businesses have already implemented mental-health parity. Many of these companies told us they've actually saved money because the policy cuts absenteeism and increases productivity.

✓ Reduce homelessness

A study carried out in the summer of 2000 revealed that on any given night, thousands of children and adults don't have a roof over their heads in our state.

This session, House Democrats proposed and passed a bill that will generate \$200 million over the next 10 years to reduce the number of homeless in our state by half.

✓ Increase affordable housing

We bolstered the Housing Trust Fund, increasing it from \$80 million to \$100 million, so that many more Washington families will have a good home.

This very important fund is used to build housing projects for low-income families, seniors and people with disabilities in communities all over our state. The stronger funding will also go toward better farmworker housing for men and women who have such a huge hand in feeding the rest of us.

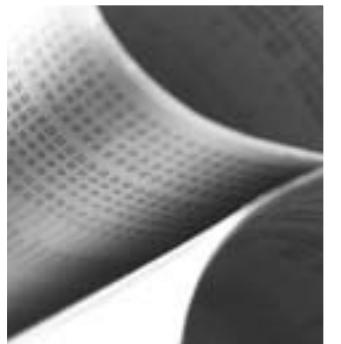
We began the 2005 session by passing strict performance audits for state agencies.

✓ Improve public services through performance audits

Starting next year, all state agencies will be required to undergo performance audits.

The independently elected State Auditor will be responsible for these audits. A citizen advisory board will establish the criteria to evaluate an agency's fiscal efficiency, program effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

All information will be reported directly to the public to help increase government accountability. Additionally, transportation projects will be subject to strict performance audits, also by the State Auditor.



We are making the air and water safer for our kids, and making sure buildings and cars are cleaner and more efficient.

✓ Build smarter

Washington is now the first state in the nation with a green building law requiring that new schools, universities and other state buildings be built smart.

Green buildings include features like natural sunlight instead of artificial light. Research proves that this helps:

- increase student test scores by 20 percent
- reduce worker absenteeism by 15 percent; and
- cut energy and utility costs by 30 percent.

✓ Promote clean air

Washington joined eight other states setting clean car standards to reduce pollution by 25 percent and save money with better gas mileage.

The Puget Sound region ranks in the top 5 percent of the country for cancer risk from air toxins. Pollution causes asthma, pneumonia and lung cancer, with children especially at risk.

This is a smart reform that will save us money at the pump with better gas mileage – the average driver will save \$11 a month — and help us live healthier and longer.

